

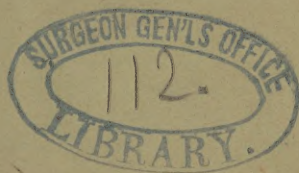
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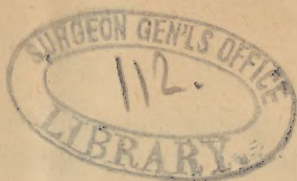
A Question in State Medicine

BY S. E. MUNFORD, M. D.

President's Address Before the Indiana State
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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.*

A QUESTION IN STATE MEDICINE. ✓

BY S. E. MUNFORD, M. D., PRINCETON, IND.

One of the expressed objects of this association is the "fostering of friendly relations among its members," and it is a purpose eminently worthy of attainment. A proper animating spirit is necessary to the success of co-operative efforts for the advancement of the interests of the profession. But the cultivation of social amenities is not the prime object of our annual convocations. Were it so, it would be a question whether our meetings were worth the time they require and the material cost they occasion. The convivial idea is, happily, a thing of the past in our history, and if there is not work done which shall send the members away with new ideas, with quickened impulse, and renewed zeal for the daily work, and which shall add something to the science of medicine and the general interest of the entire profession, the organic functions of the Society have been used amiss.

How artfully and earnestly many who are present on this occasion have petitioned for a temporary release from clients; and, having secured an absence thus, now find themselves in a state of unhappy duality—bodily here, but in mental anxiousness elsewhere. No seductive mileage or tempting per diem has drawn you hither. Business and its emoluments, home and its duties, have been subordinated for the time to the interests of the profession. Let us hope that the hours of this meet-

*Delivered before the Indiana State Medical Society.

ing shall be properly and judiciously occupied, and that we shall be able to maintain the ascending scale of the past history of the Society.

In looking through the literature of this association and that of similar organizations, one will be struck with the prominence given to questions which relate to the public health. This, in a measure, is a new inspiration. Sanitary rules are as old as the history of man, but the science of hygiene is a new creature. It was born of empiricism, and practical hygiene rested on no surer foundation than that of conjecture and observation until within a comparatively recent period. Two hundred years ago the death-rate in London was eighty per one thousand; now, it is less than one-fourth that number. A century ago, ships of the English fleet were almost driven from the seas by the ravages of scurvy; prisons and barracks were decimated by typhus, and small-pox unhindered by prophylaxis, claimed large tribute of every nation on the earth. The use of fruits and vegetables was found to mitigate the waste by scurvy; foul air was discovered as a factor in the causation of typhus, and the observations of the simple country folk of Gloucestershire gave the world vaccinia.

The restoration of man to the "health and soundness which he has lost" is no longer the quest of alchemy. These and other empirical conquests against the ravages of disease aided in the formulation of a science, whose applied laws render possible the extinction of certain contagious diseases, and whose achievements in the future will result, doubtless, in a material increase in the tenure of human life. Hygiene, though justly called a science, is not such apart from that which underlies medicine. It has no laws, and exercises no functions which have not been evolved or invoked by medical labor.

Efforts for the prevention of disease and measures to secure a more efficient and intelligent treatment of the ailments of mankind exercise the dominant energies of the profession in this day. Its labors to attain these are a free-will offering to mankind, and when considered in relation to the functions and rewards of medical skill they are the unique of humanitarian efforts.

Much misery in society is occasioned by needless litigation. Legal arbitrament of infinitesimal grievances is sought. Reason abdicates for hate. Estates are absorbed, character is sullied, and bitterness and strife engendered, which one generation shall not efface. If our brethren of the law would emulate the spirit which is abroad in the medical world, let them strive for the prevention of such results, and for the estoppel of practices of the bar which so recently had a fruitage in riot and death and disgrace to Christian civilization.

I shall occupy your time in a brief consideration of a question which, by reason of its conspicuous relationship to the vital interests of society, falls within the domain of State medicine. I refer to the education, medical and preliminary, of medical men.

For the purpose of a more intelligent presentation of the subject, I give a synopsis of the history of medical teaching:

For nearly one hundred years after the founding of the colonies, no medical school existed in this country; *medical pupillage, during this period, offering the only means of acquiring such education. After a term of private study or apprenticeship, a certificate was issued which entitled the holder to practice medicine in all its branches throughout the colonies. If any aspired to a degree, they were compelled to attend one of the European universities to attain it. At a period ante-dating the inauguration of the Revolutionary War but a few years, two schools were established, one in Philadelphia, which has been perpetuated in the University of Pennsylvania, and one in New York as a department of King's, now Columbia College. The instruction in these schools was restricted almost wholly to the elements of medical science. The illuminating clinic had no place in the curriculum of that day. When the great advancement in medical science since that era is remembered, how like travesty these ancient lectures would seem could they be reproduced in one of our modern medical colleges! But these mother institutions had an aspect which makes them of blessed memory. They had a high standard of

*Encyclopedia of Education.

requirements, higher, perhaps, than any medical institution has maintained since that time. In King's College it was required: First, that there should be a preliminary examination in Latin and some branches of natural philosophy. This was required of all who had not taken a degree in arts; second, after three years' pupilage and one complete course of lectures, the bachelor's degree was conferred upon worthy candidates; third, after another year, and two full courses of lectures, students who were twenty-two years of age were admitted to examination for the doctorate, and were required to print and publicly defend a thesis on some medical subject. This seems a well-nigh perfect model of requirements; and we may readily believe, as was claimed for it, that the profession of that day was thoroughly imbued with the transplanted spirit of pride in letters and scholarly dignity which attached to colonial society. But how puny their science, how inadequate their medical and surgical armament, and how crude and heroic their treatment of disease! Much science and meager learning, with all attaching incongruity and reproach, are not so detrimental to the interests of ailing humanity as were the functions of medicine in that age.

These schools ceased to exist during the period of the Revolutionary struggles, but were reorganized soon afterward, together with Harvard, Queen's, and Dartmouth. They were with one accord rigorous in requirements, and so carefully did they guard the honor of the profession in exercising their privilege of conferring degrees, that at the close of the eighteenth century their graduates numbered but two hundred and fifty. During the first quarter of the present century the schools increased to sixteen, distributed in twelve States. About this time alliance with universities began to cease, and independent charters were sought and easily obtained from State legislatures. The European method of teaching and licensing, which had hitherto prevailed, in a large measure ceased; preliminary qualifications were no longer demanded, the minimum of requirements were pretty generally adopted, the time of study was shortened, the examinations became less difficult, the printing and defense of theses were remitted, with the effect to materially

depreciate the value of the medical diploma at home and wholly to rob it of all respectability abroad. From this time medical schools assumed the distinctive American type. Separated from the influence of association with literary colleges, and obtaining with no difficulty the legal right of existence, schools of inferior grade sprang up all over the country. Men with neither natural nor acquired fitness occupied chairs in many of these institutions, and among the incident abuses of privilege were the almost unlimited granting of the honorary degree, the granting of degrees upon the certificates of men of whom nothing was known by the faculties, setting forth that the candidate had engaged a certain number of years in practice in lieu of one course of lectures, and in many cases the issuance of diplomas *in absentia* or requiring only the formal appearance of the applicant for matriculation and the payment of fees. The American Medical Association, soon after its organization, undertook to effect a reform in medical teaching and to establish a higher standard of attainments for admission to the doctorate. A generally recognized need for such reform was, indeed, the incentive to the organization of this body, but, despite all efforts, matters grew scarcely better until within a period not very remote from the present. Thus we see that whatever of error and inadequacy there may be in medical teaching to-day, and whatever there may be of incompetency in the profession, they are the fruitage of years and can not be remedied in a day; and, however much we may desire reform and labor for its accomplishment, we must await the results of legitimate efforts to this end.

I am not here to indulge pessimistic views as to the intellectual and literary status of our profession. Upon the basis of achievements, medicine need not hide its face when comparison is made with the other learned professions. From Pliny to Molière, and to a later era, there have been those to rail at and caricature medicine because of its feeble science and impotent art. But the science of medicine and the art of healing are no longer viewed as traditional vagaries. They are eminently respectable in this age. Ignorance and incompetency make no such conquests. Physicians, as a rule, have a close

fellowship with the learned in all departments, and enjoy in a marked degree the favor of society. The *personnel* of any session of this organization presents an aspect of gentility and possesses and aptitude for extemporaneous debate and discussion of questions of business or science which shall not be easily excelled by any other collection of individuals in our State. But, brethren, though we engage now and then in a little just self-laudation, we can not close our eyes to the fact that much ignorance is clothed by that ample American degree, Doctor of Medicine, and that the entire body suffers reproach therefrom, which, in a great measure, compromises its respectability and hinders its usefulness.

If, in the struggle for professional existence, the survival of the wisest, strongest, and best were assured by the right of superior attainments, then all questions regarding the medical character might be left to the adjudication of destiny. But so long as the hypercredulous and easily gulled characteristics of human society maintain their present standard, the ignorant doctor will not perish from the earth. His standing and apparent success, like that of all ignorant adherents of medicine and of all the disciples of nonsense, rest upon the intrinsic tendency to recovery from acute disease—upon the healing power of nature. His cases of pneumonia, of typhoid fever and scarlatina, we must acknowledge with confusion of face have no notable fatal pre-eminence over like cases in the hands of his learned neighbor. This, to rather a large element in society, closes the question; it is viewed as the *experimentum crucis*. His ignorance of the lesions of morbid anatomy and pathology; his inability to comprehend the intricate phenomena of disease; to read aright the endless reflex symptoms and trace them to cause; to rise to the demands of emergencies; to recognize the very beginning of contagious diseases, and to effect and enforce measures for the safety of the home and community, are deficiencies which seem not to come within the range of public vision. He kicks up a pedantic dust which utterly befogs many who believe themselves learned and wise. All his functions are shrouded in mystery and his endless errors are hidden by the grave. All his deaths are attributed to Providence; "The Lord

gave and the Lord hath taken away," he says, in mock condolence to the bereft. It is a precious element in the faith of the Christian which can in a needful hour appropriate this sentiment, but it was not uttered by the Prince of Uz for the comfort or defense of the licensed destroyer of his kind. Any effort to check the arrogance of this character or to expose his ignorance, by the decent follower of medicine in his vicinity, evokes the cry of "persecution" and enables him to pose as a martyr, the coveted opportunity of every mountebank. The cruelest treatment he can receive from an individual doctor, or from an association of doctors, is to be ignored. But is he to be forever unhindered by society? His congener in law, may be disposed of by disbarment; the teacher may lose his license, and the minister of the Gospel is amenable to the courts of the church, but the medical free lance in Indiana is absolutely without restraint. This extreme medical character is, in many cases, the adherent of a system. We could heartily wish, for the decency of our profession, it were always so. But the toga of regular medicine is not always a garment of righteousness. Some of the most noxious quacks on the face of the earth are under the same sign-manual with ourselves. What is the cause of the measure of incompetency which exists in our profession, and what are the means for its cure?

In the ages when medicine was the battle-field of tradition, superstition and the follies of alchemy, it was endeavored to give it the dignity of a science; but it passed but little beyond the domain of dogma until the dawn of the eighteenth century, when the spirit of Francis Bacon began to be manifest in experimental science. Since then, medicine has had a gradual but scarcely interrupted growth, ever enlarging its borders and year by year growing nearer the truth. From these facts in history, we learn the needed remedy, *science is its own conservator*. If the functions of medicine are debauched to-day in every community in the land, and a crude art, wholly divorced from the science upon which the true art of healing reposes is imposed upon society, it is largely because men of insufficient preliminary education and mental training are allowed to undertake the duties of the physician. It is need-

less for me to say that there are many notable characters in our profession whose early opportunities were limited, and who by zeal and industry have both glorified themselves and the profession of their choice. This is true of individuals in every department of life. "It is scarcely possible to prevent great men from rising up under any system of education, however bad. Teach men demonology, or astrology, and you will have a certain portion of original genius in spite of these or any other branches of ignorance or folly." But it is true, as a rule, that those who enter professional life with meager literary attainments remain inexpansive and unimpressible throughout life.

It has been the custom to charge the faulty education of the profession in this country to the medical schools. From the largest in the land to those of exiguous classes and light equipments, these institutions are not guiltless. They have been too much possessed by our national impatience and hurry, and have practically allowed students to determine the time they should study and what should be the standard of requirements. Most of us will recall our medical college days with humiliating memory of the general success of candidates for graduation. Rare birds were the "plucked" ones. If the student was faithfully in his seat, and assumed an air of attention and respect to the oracles of the chair, the inquisition of the green room was aptly tempered to his capacity. But medical colleges are not justly chargeable with illiteracy and incompetency in our profession. These institutions are the creatures of the profession, and in a large measure partake of its spirit and temper. They are not apt to rise above the fountain which feeds them, and so, when we talk of elevating the standard of medicine by reforming the medical colleges, we undertake the solution of the problem at the wrong side of the equation.

Mental capacity is the prime factor in the acquisition of medical knowledge. To engage intelligently in the practice of the healing art there must be acute perceptive faculties and enlarged reasoning powers; there must be an educated judgment, a disciplined mind. The cause of pathological phenomena is not appreciable to the senses as are the phenomena themselves.

In the subjective and objective symptoms of disease we have facts from which we seek the cause. Symptoms are taken singly and studied and grouped, their bearing toward each other is considered, and thus step by step we go within, to cause. An appreciable lesion given, and the mind seeks phenomena which should be sequential. The physician must be both inductive and deductive. He must be open to vast *a posteriori* and *a priori* visions and be capable of putting them to the test of his senses. If these methods of inquiry be not habitually indulged, he gropes in his work and his functions are those of the empiric. Such habits of investigation impart an enjoyable aspect to the physician's work; they mitigate the drudgery that attends his daily rounds; they convince him of ignorance of many things respecting which others are taught, and incite him to seek enlargement of his range of knowledge by associating with others; they impel him to keep up with current medical matters; to fill his library; to equip himself with all the instruments of precision for the study and diagnosis of disease; and these are the characteristics of legitimate medicine which lift it, in the superior excellency of its service to mankind, above any puny faith which quits all search with the symptom higher than the peak of Orizaba is above the clouds of the valley.

The education which will give the inclination and ability to use the mental powers in solving the problems of disease must, in a large measure, be acquired before the medical course of study is undertaken. If a young man go from the grammar grade, or from the farm, equipped by a few winters' study in the district school, unread even in the history of his own land, with little or no training in the English tongue, and essay the study of medicine, its mazes will confound him, and many of its essential truths will be to him as a sealed book all his days. It is not possible for an immature mind to take cognizance of scientific facts.

Medical schools can not, by the wisest arrangement of curricula, by graded courses and lengthened terms, nor by the most ample equipage of chair or laboratory, bridge the chasm of original illiteracy; nor can they be expected, reasonably, to

turn away all the ill-educated or deny them graduation, while this class is so largely sent them from our offices.

The fundamental need, then, in efforts to reform medical education, is to secure better literary attainments for those who would undertake to study and practice medicine, and any scheme that shall not keep this fact in view will fail of success. All of us have sinned against our profession and need to have more concern for its honor and dignity. We have received students unfit for study because we had not the courage to deny the son, perhaps, of a friend, such privilege; or it may have been to secure the measure of public favor supposed to attach to the care of students; or from the baser purpose of securing servile help in our offices. We need to cultivate pride and jealousy, which shall impose themselves against the encroachments of the ignorant and unlearned, and which shall impel every honorable adherent of medicine to say to the candidate for admission, "You shall not, with my consent or by my help, assume the title or undertake the duties of the profession which takes precedence of all others in the affairs of men until you shall exhibit proper and sufficient evidence of educational fitness for the exalted position to which you aspire."

Every ignorant man admitted to our profession has an injurious influence on the estimation in which the whole body is held. His errors are charged to faultiness of the science and art of medicine, and the distrust which he begets for himself occasions a want of confidence in the profession around him. Notably, his unceasing and heroic dosing of the sick is an offense for which we keenly suffer.

But, it may be urged, should a high standard of literary attainments be established, many ambitious and honorable young persons who esteem themselves unable to enjoy academic or collegiate privileges would be denied admission to medicine. Let them seek one of the honorable pursuits in life where they could be useful, and where illiteracy can do no harm. The exigency of the medical service to mankind is not such as to demand the admission of every one who imagines a professional career decreed for him.

This Society has already done much for the improvement of the profession in this State; but much remains to be done. In the auxiliary societies efforts should be made to gather in all honorable men engaged in practice. The larger the number we can have amendable to the rules of this Society and interested in its work, the greater will be the influence which we shall be able to exert within the profession for its improvement, and the greater also will be our influence with the people in matters pertaining to State medicine. It is better to draw in and improve those who have been admitted with deficient education than to exclude and ignore them. "One of the best methods of rendering study agreeable and profitable," says Sydney Smith, "is to live with able men and to suffer all the pangs of inferiority which the want of knowledge always inflicts." Few in our profession are too great or too learned to be excused by such rule; but the young and inexperienced are especially profited by association for the study of disease and the essential truths of science. They catch the spirit of emulation and learn what they never would have known else, that in medicine "a little learning is a dangerous thing." County societies would find it profitable to engage the members in elementary work. Those who have been for a long time in practice need such exercise, and younger members will always be attracted and profited by it. A paper now and then in which will be presented a study in chemistry, physiology, or regional anatomy will, in itself, teach something perhaps to all in attendance, and will incite to home-study of these and other fundamental subjects. Neglect of first principles begets empirical practice. The county society should also excite its members to investigation and research. This does not necessarily demand the crucible and retort, or exhaustive histological study. Any one with average professional sagacity, who shall for ten years of his life engage diligently in the collection of facts in relation to *one disease*, will be able to make a contribution to medicine which shall grant him an honorable place in its literature.

In the usually well-directed labors of this body has there not been neglect of the collective investigation method of studying disease? The county society, with rightly used functions, is

the nursery of the profession. It teaches the young member how to exercise aright his newly acquired duties; it is a spur and corrective to the older, and imparts to all who are impressionable and teachable the true ethical spirit. This Society and its auxiliaries are to subserve no set or class in our profession. They are educating centers in the interest of the profession and for the good of the people. We have in this country, I believe, but one class medical organization. The American Academy of Medicine limits its membership to those who have degrees in arts or sciences. Perhaps they attach too much merit to the formal attainment of a degree. All the decorated fools in the world do not hold the degrees of medical schools. This class in society, whether it be brayed in a mortar or ground through college, will adhere to its original type. The American Academy can not shut it out by any titular bar or bolt. But this organization is not to be despised because it is exclusive. An aristocracy of letters tramples upon the rights of no one. It will doubtless prove a sort of *vis a fronte*, and in the future, when we educate our sons for the profession of medicine, we shall find ourselves so fitting them as to render them eligible for membership in any of its institutions in the land.

One State and some local societies in this country have established a standard of literary attainments for those who desire to enter the profession, and make it obligatory upon their members to receive no one under their care who shall not possess the certificate of a board of examiners setting forth their fitness to engage in the study of medicine. The perfection of the organization of this body and its admirable *esprit de corps* render a measure of this kind easily practicable to it, and I trust we shall have such as a part of our organic law at an early day. Such restriction of medical pupilage could not fail to exert an immediate salutary influence.

In presenting this subject for your consideration, I have endeavored to show the following points: That vicious practices in medical schools began in the remote past, and have been fostered in our day by competition and by the rush and haste which are characteristic of American energy; that the fundamental cause of incompetency in the medical profession in this

country is primal illiteracy; that the intelligent comprehension and use of an art which rests upon science is not possible to the ignorant; that the presence in the profession of those who have not educational attainments essential to intelligent citizenship is injurious beyond all calculation to the interests of medicine, and is a peril to society; that the remedy is a better scholarship, and its application is largely with the profession. With all there is to regret as to the educational standard of medicine, there is just cause in this day for congratulation. There is a general awakening in favor of reform, and if we read aright the signs of the times, the next decade will mark a greater advancement in the interests of our profession than has been wrought in thrice that period of the past. The medical press, the medical schools of the better class, and the general sentiment of the profession seem to favor measures which have for their object the improvement of the educational qualifications of the American doctor. While we invoke and await the aid of the law to regulate the practice of medicine in the interest of the people, let us commend our cause to society by unceasing internal efforts for reform.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. Lomar, of Grant county—Mr. President, I move the thanks of this Society be tendered our worthy President for the able and interesting address to which he has treated us, and that it be published in the transaction of the Society.

Dr. Hibberd, of Wayne county—Mr. President, in seconding the motion, I beg to express my gratitude and admiration for the address which we have just heard. I think in its beauty and elegance of diction it is in itself one of the best evidences of the good results of culture. I do not now recall a single sentiment with which I do not have the most perfect unity. I am in my own mind thoroughly convinced that a complete education, not only in medicine as it stands, but in literature and science, in general as it exists among us, will do more to eradicate that erroneous idea that everybody that is sick must take disturbing drugs. It has been said here to-day that, perhaps, if some of

us lived long enough we would teach the sick world that there was nothing to do but to get well. I hope to the Lord that the time will come when we will be able to see just that end, and it seems to me that the sentiment expressed in this paper is as admirable an embodiment of that sentiment as it is possible for anyone to make, and I must commend, in conclusion, the chasteness and beauty of the manner in which these most admirable sentiments were conveyed to us.

Dr. Sterens, of Indianapolis—Mr. President, as the subject matter of this address should be considered at some length, and as the time is, perhaps, not permitted to-night, I move that it be taken up at 3 o'clock to-morrow afternoon, at the time that the subject of medical legislation is to be considered by the Society.

The Presiding Officer (Dr. Harvey in the Chair)—There is a motion before the Society to thank the President for his address. That will be taken by consent. Now, the question is on the motion of Dr. Stevens.

The motion was agreed to.

The Presiding Officer—I am sure that the paper we have just heard must give expression to the thoughts of the majority of the medical profession who have considered this subject, and I want to say, before I leave the chair, that I think the manner of treating this subject, by our President, here, to-night, is one which will do far more toward bringing about an improvement in medical education than all the resolutions and denunciations that could be passed by the State, County, or the American Medical Associations. It is the proper spirit in which to meet this question, in my judgment.

Dr. Sterens, of Indianapolis—Mr. President, I will not be here to-morrow, and I want to say I heartily endorse that part of the paper which refers to the necessity of preliminary education as a qualification of medical students before engaging in the study of medicine. I am proud of the address, and am sorry I will not be here to hear it discussed to-morrow.

Dr. Blount, of Wabash.—Mr. President, I wish to say that I think this address strikes at the proper place for reform. In accomplishing any moral reform we have got to do

it by an educational process, and it is so in reference to a reform in our profession. I would like very much to see this society place itself upon a plane, as suggested by our President, whereby each member of the State Medical Society would be under an obligation (so binding that his relation as a member would be jeopardized by its violation) that they would not encourage, and would not take as a student, any one who is incompetent to grasp the ideas of scientific medicine.

Dr. Waterman, of Indianapolis—Mr. President, before this address passes from observation, I should like to add my word of approval to the views stated by it, and also to express my appreciation of its intrinsic beauty and merit. The fact is somewhat as my friend Dr. Blount expresses it—there must be a gradual elevation of educational and scientific attainments required in the medical student, and it is by efforts in these directions that the profession of medicine will be elevated. I hope this matter will be discussed until the necessity of comprehensive and widened culture among physicians is more fully appreciated than it is at present.

Dr. Woollen, of Switzerland county—Mr. President, I want to commend the address we have just listened to. I was also highly pleased with the remarks of Dr. Hibberd, that when our profession consists of liberal-minded, cultivated men, the day for presuming to cure most all diseases by the indiscriminate use of disturbing drugs will have passed away. The time was when I used to criticise in my own mind some of Dr. Hibberd's writings on this subject, but I am probably on his side of the line myself now. In regard to medical practitioners taking unqualified persons in their offices as students, we all know that that is wrong; and every physician should feel that the honor of the profession, to some extent, rests upon his own shoulders. But I think the reform should begin with the medical colleges as well as with the private preceptor. It is a well-known fact that colleges matriculate students who have no preceptors at all, and never had any, and don't pretend to have; and they attend a few courses of lectures and are accredited by that college. I am aware that not every medical college can be charged with this crime, but there are a good many in the

United States that don't require any qualifications whatever for matriculation. I think it is disgraceful, and I don't think we can be too severe upon a college of that kind.

Dr. Newcomer, of Indianapolis—Mr. President, this subject was introduced when I first came into this Society, in one of the first meetings that we had in the old State House building. I think the education of the profession has improved since then, but it has not improved as rapidly as I should expect. Dr. Woollen says the medical colleges ought to improve, and I think they ought, and in the next place, we are at fault. We ought to require every medical student to have a preliminary education equal to those that propose to enter the law, or the ministry; and when we can establish a standard of that kind, establish a collegiate education as a basis for a medical education, then there is no profession on top of this earth that is the equal of our own. In the meantime, if we take inferior men, we must expect to occupy simply a secondary position.

